

Lassen National Forest
Motor Vehicle Use Map Update Project
Background, Purpose and Need, Proposed Action
12 April 2018

Background

The Travel Management Rule of 2005 (36 CFR Part 212.50) effectively closed national forests to general cross-country motorized travel, and required designation of roads, trails, and areas open to motor vehicle use. It specified that those roads, trails, and areas open to motor vehicle use, including off-highway vehicle (OHV) use, be published on a Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) provided to the public free-of-charge.

To implement the Travel Management Rule, the Lassen National Forest (NF) published its Record of Decision (ROD) for Motorized Travel Management in 2010. Since that time, numerous stakeholders, including five of the seven counties overlapping the Lassen NF, have requested that more road miles on the forest be made available to OHVs. Stakeholders also requested more connections to unpaved county roads, most which are already available to OHV use through various county policies and ordinances.

On Page 19 of the ROD, the Forest Supervisor discussed tiered implementation of the decision, allowing for the possibility of adding routes in the future that would require additional analysis and decision-making. Appendix B addresses application of the Travel Management Rule to this effort.

This proposal also addresses two goals from the Lassen NF Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP or “Forest Plan”):

Forest Goal 5a: Provide a stable and cost-efficient road system through appropriate construction, re-construction, and/or maintenance

Forest Goal 15c: Provide diverse opportunities for off-highway vehicle recreation

Proposal Development

The current effort responds to stakeholder requests, and the intent of the ROD, by examining ways to revise the MVUM. The intent is to provide additional mileage of OHV opportunity on existing roads on the Lassen NF. To develop this proposed action, a team of resource specialists, line officers, and consultants reviewed all 577 miles of existing Maintenance Level 3 (ML3) roads on the Lassen NF.

ML3 roads are open and maintained for passenger vehicles, and most are not designated nor currently open to OHVs. These roads are generally surfaced with gravel, cinders, or improved native material; some may be native-surfaced. ML2 roads are open to OHVs, and managed for high-clearance passenger vehicles. They typically receive little to no annual maintenance, and usually only receive attention for special resource concerns or occasional vegetation projects.

The team ranked each ML3 road as low, medium, or high priority for field review, based on a number of factors. Engineers then field reviewed and drafted reports for 30 roads ranked high or medium priority. In total, approximately 246.4 miles of roads were or will be field surveyed for motorized mixed use safety and possible inclusion in this proposed action. The field reviews followed a Forest Service Regional Office protocol for evaluating safety and other considerations for potential motorized mixed use (OHVs and passenger vehicles sharing the same road segment).

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For each road reviewed, the team proposed one of three options for all or parts of the road:

1. No change (remain as ML3 and no OHV access)
2. Downgrade to ML2 and allow motorized mixed use
3. Retain as ML3 and allow motorized mixed use

The Lassen NF hosted two public meetings in May 2017, and a public field trip in October 2017. Forest staff also met with representatives from county boards of supervisors, a state senator, a federal congressman, Tribes, the California Highway Patrol and CA State Parks. The Lassen NF, and the Pacific Southwest Regional Office of the Forest Service, are working closely with the state and counties to align their understandings of the rules and regulations affecting OHV use on roads managed by different entities in California. The team working to develop the proposed action for this project used stakeholder input in several ways:

1. To provide more and better information in materials related to this project, especially on the public website.
2. Some general comments were used to establish criteria for prioritizing roads for field review, including an emphasis on connectivity, loops, destination access to views and lookouts, and avoidance of sensitive natural and cultural resource areas.
3. Other general comments led the team to consider noise, wildlife habitat, and the Travel Management Rule. The first consideration is not identified as an issue because the use of existing roads by OHVs, connecting to existing OHV routes, should not substantially increase noise. Likewise, use of existing roads by different vehicle types should not create additional habitat fragmentation. Finally, Appendix B addresses application of the Travel Management Rule to this effort.
4. Comments requesting OHV access on specific roads were all considered individually. Where possible, these roads were field reviewed and are part of the proposed action. Some requested roads were outside the scope of this effort because they were not Lassen NF system roads, or because they were already ML2, and therefore already available to OHV use.

Purpose and Need for Action

There is a need to make existing National Forest System (NFS) roads available for off-highway vehicle (OHV) use, and work with stakeholders to prioritize roads to be available on the Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM).

The purpose of this project is to enhance and diversify off-highway motorized recreation opportunity by increasing the mileage of existing roads, and connectivity of routes, available to OHVs, while providing for public safety and protecting natural and cultural resources.

Proposed Action Description

Table 1 summarizes the ML3 roads proposed for new OHV access through motorized mixed use. It also specifies how they will provide that access (ML3 Mixed Use, or Downgrade to ML2). A total of 21 roads are proposed for changes to accommodate motorized mixed use. 96.9 miles of road segments are proposed for downgrading to ML2, and 71.1 miles are proposed for ML3

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mixed use. Some segments are No Change. These segments will remain as ML3, with no mixed use. They are shown in the table for clarity, but will not be considered in the analysis, except as part of the existing condition. They are also not depicted in the Proposed Action map. Roads that were field reviewed, but not proposed for any changes, are not shown here.

Where downgrading or ML3 mixed use is proposed, the necessary implementation changes are largely in mapping, signage, and OHV access to the road. This means no immediate physical engineering changes will be installed on the ground. No culverts will be removed, and no slopes or grades will be altered. The changes analyzed in the following section on environmental effects will only be the result of OHV use on the existing roads. In the case of downgrading, the potential impacts may be the result of roads receiving less maintenance over time. User comfort and convenience would no longer be management objectives for roads being downgraded to ML2. Resource concerns (e.g., erosion) could still be addressed on these roads, as needed. Mileage listed in Table 1 below is based on existing Forest Service roads data and right-of-way.

Table 1. Proposed Action Summary

	Road #	Segment	Miles	Proposal	District
1	25N05	all	6.8	ML3 Mixed Use*	Almanor
2	26N27	all	5.0	ML3 Mixed Use*	Almanor
3	27N04	all	6.6	ML3 Mixed Use*	Almanor
4	28N60	all	3.7	Downgrade to ML2	Eagle Lake
5	29N18	all	13.5	ML3 Mixed Use*	Almanor
6	29N19	all	6.6	Downgrade to ML2	Almanor
7	29N23Y	CR 101 to junction with 29N06	4.4	ML3 Mixed Use*	Eagle Lake
	29N23Y	above 29N06 junction to lookout	-	No Change	Eagle Lake
8	29N48	all	27.0	Downgrade to ML2	Almanor
9	32N09	32N21 to 32N09A Cone Lake turnoff	7.7	Downgrade to ML2	Eagle Lake
	32N09	From 32N60 to 32N10	-	No Change	Eagle Lake
	32N09	Between 32N60 and 32N09A Cone Lake	0.9	ML3 Mixed Use	Eagle Lake
10	32N21	32N61 to 32N94Y	1.2	ML3 Mixed Use	Hat Creek
	32N21	remainder	-	No Change	Hat Creek
11	32N24	32N18 to 32N36	1.2	ML3 Mixed Use	Hat Creek
	32N24	remainder	-	No Change	Hat Creek
12	32N60	all	7.4	Downgrade to ML2	Eagle Lake
13	33N02	remainder (Hwy 44 to Aspen Wells)	8.0	ML3 Mixed Use*	Eagle Lake
	33N02	33N15 to 33N26	2.9	Downgrade to ML2	Eagle Lake
14	33N08	all	4.2	ML3 Mixed Use*	Hat Creek
15	33N31	all	3.4	Downgrade to ML2	Eagle Lake
16	34N13	all	8.1	Downgrade to ML2	Eagle Lake
17	34N29	all	4.8	Downgrade to ML2	Hat Creek
18	34N34	all	9.3	Downgrade to ML2	Hat Creek
19	35N08	starting at CR 111	16.0	Downgrade to ML2	Eagle Lake
	35N08	southern portion (CR 111 to Hwy 44)	-	No Change	Eagle Lake

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	Road #	Segment	Miles	Proposal	District
20	36N18	section between 34N13 and 34N34	1.4	ML3 Mixed Use	Hat Creek
21	40N04	all	17.9	ML3 Mixed Use*	Hat Creek
	Total mileage of new OHV access		168.0		

* indicates a road segment greater than 3 miles in length, which will require a specific exception from the Regional Office due to the inconsistency with State vehicle code "combined use highway" law. Approval of these exceptions must be in place before a final decision on the project.

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Figure 1. Map of roads proposed for new OHV access

